



**RSL**  
Victoria

# RECONNECTED

2022 ANNUAL REPORT





**CELEBRATING  
A YEAR OF  
CONNECTION,  
COMMEMORATION  
& COMMUNITY**



**RSL**  
Victoria







Persona - a collaboration between ANVAM and Michael Christofas 2017-23, Digital Photography

## GORDON'S STORY

Gordon Traill is a veteran artist, photographer, author, painter, volunteer and arts mentor at the Australian National Veteran Arts Museum (ANVAM). He served 28 years in the ADF, retiring in 2006 due to illness linked to his 2004 operational service in Iraq.

For a number of years following his service, he struggled with PTSD, major depression and skeletal injuries. During his deployment to Iraq, he kept a photographic record. Ten years ago, his wife Shona encouraged a return to photography which reignited his artistic passion. He has used art as a healing and wellbeing tool to aid his PTSD.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Gordon first began to explore painting and is deeply drawn to textural exploration. He has published works and his art has been recognised at major exhibitions.

### About the cover art

*Texture 2020* by Gordon Traill was made with a mixture of cold wax and oil paint which provides a thick, buttery consistency, and was applied directly to canvas with a palette knife.

## About ANVAM

ANVAM showcases the stories of veterans' unique lived experiences during and post-service.

ANVAM was established in 2013 in response to the growing need for innovation and community engagement to address the declining state of veteran wellbeing.

As a veteran-led charity and Public Benevolent Institution, ANVAM supports the mental, physical and social wellbeing of current and former service members and families by facilitating community-based arts engagements.

ANVAM delivers a strengths-based approach grounded in creative expression, incentivising wellness and promoting social connectedness as the keys to wellbeing.

Our whole-of-life focus engages veterans in all stages of their Defence journeys and equips them with the necessary tools to promote validation, identity and purpose.

ANVAM actively seeks partnerships across the veteran, arts and health sectors to collaboratively develop thought-leadership, research and opportunities for the veteran community to thrive.

Connect with us at: [anvam.org.au](http://anvam.org.au)

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

This Annual Report reflects RSL Victoria's achievements throughout 2022. It was a proud year for the RSL in Victoria as our network strengthened bonds with the veteran community, honed our service delivery, and reconnected with RSL members and the wider populations of the neighbourhoods, towns and suburbs in which our Sub-Branches are engrained.

From our wide-ranging advocacy and charitable efforts for veterans and their families, to flood relief assistance endeavours, to raising funds for locals in need, to providing a space for community connection and much more, the RSLs resolve to foster camaraderie and mateship was evident throughout the year, beginning to end.

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# WELCOME FROM STATE PRESIDENT DR ROBERT WEBSTER OAM



**After two years of pandemic restrictions altering our commemorative endeavours in ways never experienced before in the century-long existence of the RSL, 50,000 Victorians returned in person to the ANZAC Day Dawn Service at the Shrine of Remembrance. There is no greater example of the enduring strength of the RSL in Victoria than this.**

The RSL is an organisation woven into the fabric of Victoria. Our efforts to support veterans and their families, the importance of our commemorative work, the overwhelming support of the wider community during our fundraising appeals, the tradition of AFL's ANZAC Appeal round, our Remembrance Day city-stopping bugle activations and more are all part of the culture here.

The numerous tragedies of the pandemic broke many an organisation, charitable or otherwise, but in 2022 the RSL in Victoria re-emerged from two years of regrouping and rethinking and confidently resumed our work in the neighbourhoods, towns, suburbs and the city of Melbourne itself.

This Annual Report highlights our achievements and our reflections from 2022. It also acts as a signpost for the future, hinting at where we are headed. It was a big year, despite the challenges.

We appointed a new CEO, Sue Cattermole, who sat down at her desk and got to work diligently and admirably. We are lucky to have her.

Our Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Working Group

continued its vital work in openly and collaboratively seeking solutions to so many of the problems highlighted by this long-overdue response by the government. Another Working Group was formed — this time for RSL Victoria's Reconciliation Action Plan and incredible work was completed to finalise this important document.

After canvassing the Federal Government for a question to be included in the Australian Census relating to veterans for nearly 20 years, a question was included on the 2021 Census. During the second half of 2022 we received a high-level, state-by-state analysis of the 2021 Census results. On Census night there were 105,232 veterans and currently serving members in Victoria. The number of Life and Service members in Victoria at 31 December 2021 totalled 23,686; this is a little over 22.5% of those eligible for membership. Of all the states this proportion was the highest in Victoria but it certainly presents a significant challenge for the RSL in Victoria and nationally.

Our in-person fundraising activity returned to a heartening and overwhelmingly warm reception from

the public. Sub-Branches welcomed members back into their physical spaces (the importance of this cannot be overstated) and their professional staff and volunteers upskilled via workshops and forums held around the state.

Additionally, the 107th Annual State Conference took place both online and in person and continued to prove to be an essential part of RSL's Victoria's governance — more than that though, it was a wonderful opportunity for so many around our network to get reacquainted.

As always, I would like to thank my colleagues on the State Executive for their commitment, vision and ensuring RSL Victoria always remains focused on the many facets of our mission.

I also thank the many volunteers who give so much to the RSL. We cannot function without their incredible work. Finally, thank you to the RSL membership for your support, mateship and for reconnecting with us in 2022. We look forward to a bright future with you but, for now, please enjoy a look back at what may well be remembered as a pivotal year for the RSL in Victoria.

# WELCOME FROM THE CEO SUE CATTERMOLLE



**I was incredibly proud to become the new CEO of RSL Victoria. Against the backdrop of the profoundly important Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, I found the RSL in Victoria ready for change and incredibly open.**

My time at RSL Victoria began in July 2022, just days before the 107th Annual State Conference. It was timely to attend the conference so soon after starting with the RSL and getting the chance to meet Sub-Branch delegates that had travelled from all corners of the state not just to attend, but, more importantly, to vote and lend their many voices to the future of the RSL in Victoria.

RSL Victoria is an organisation where past and present live hand in hand. Within my first few days of joining the RSL, Dr Webster shared with me the founding charter of the RSL in Victoria. Put simply and beautifully, the shared purpose of the League is "to help one another in this battle of life." This sentiment is something that I have heard expressed again, and again, although not in those exact words, when speaking with volunteers, members and staff from across the League. Each of whom has a story, a connection and a desire to achieve the best outcomes for veterans and their families.

So much of my first year has been spent listening and learning. There are almost 183,000 members and more than 100 years of history within

the RSL in Victoria today. Although I'll never hear all the stories, both past and present, within the League, the ones that resonate the loudest are those that look to the future and reflect the collective values of empathy, tradition, integrity, mateship, compassion and respect.

Over the last six months, we have held a series of meetings with Sub-Branch representatives to seek their views on the direction our new Strategic Plan should take. In these meetings, our Sub-Branches shared their energy and passion. Each member in attendance shared stories of their connection to the ex-service and local communities and provided insight into the challenges that individual Sub-Branches face. While each Sub-Branch is different, with various membership sizes, operating models and locations, there is a striking commonality of purpose within the network.

With more than 260 individual Sub-Branches, each with its own stories and challenges, the RSL network in Victoria can, at times, feel too big to grasp. However, to take the 'I' out of the narrative and consider all parts of the whole is a powerful lesson that can be applied to how we all view the

RSL in Victoria. Yes, we have many Sub-Branches in many communities across the state, but we are also one RSL.

The gradual changes, the generational development, the way shared purpose is formed and focused matters more, in the long run, than the people they are shaped from.

Last year was a moment in time in the more than century-long history of the RSL in Victoria. In the full story of the RSL, 2022 will be remembered as a time that the League reconnected with each other and our communities. This story is on almost every page of this Annual Report, and now in 2023, looking back on 2022, I am confident we are laying the foundation for what comes next: a new chapter in the RSL's story where we respond to the challenges of our changing environment, lift up the voice of veterans and their families, building connections and support veterans and families to ensure that their service is not forgotten, and they can access the support need to live a fulfilling and rewarding life post service.

# ABOUT THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIAN BRANCH)

*The RSL was the first national welfare agency for veterans in Australia and welfare remains our prime function today.*

## OUR MISSION

To provide the best possible support and services to all generations of veterans and their families in Victoria.

## OUR VISION

Every veteran in Victoria is respected and supported, together with their families.

## OUR VALUES



## OUR SUB-BRANCHES

RSL Victoria is an ex-service organisation and charity that was founded in 1916 by troops returning from WWI to provide comradeship and support to Australia's veterans and their families.

We work with various support organisations and the community to support veterans and their families in times of need. We provide support structures for employment, connection and wellbeing designed to enable veterans and their families to be self-reliant and live fulfilling, healthy lives.

We achieve this by:

### WORKING WITH VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

- Support for Veterans and their families is provided through wellbeing, advocacy and employment services to ensure the transition back to civilian life is not undertaken alone.

### WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

- Our RSL Sub-Branches are spaces for veterans and their families to find connections with each other and the wider community. RSL Sub-Branches are as community-minded as they are veteran-focused and during times of disaster or peril have opened their doors to all in need.

## WORKING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

- We partner with other professional and like-minded service organisations who provide the assistance that we cannot to enable the self-reliance and wellbeing of veterans and their families.
- We advocate for veterans and their families to ensure they receive the outcomes they deserve.
- Our Veterans & Families Hubs provide welcoming spaces for veterans and their families to access a range of services onsite, staffed by professionals all focused on assisting and supporting veterans in need.

## OUR HISTORY

In 1916, there was no formal government welfare service for veterans and the RSL committed itself to providing for the sick, wounded and needy among those who had served, including their dependants.

The RSL was instrumental in creating:

- A Commonwealth repatriation system
- Service, disability and war widow pensions
- Various employment and retraining programs (for many years, even operating its own employment bureau)
- Child health programs
- Vocational guidance services.

\*For more on our history, please see the extensive RSL Victoria Timeline on pages 6-7.

## OUR ORGANISATION TODAY

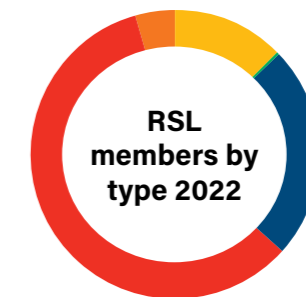
Although our core mission has never changed, the RSL's role has evolved over the past century and continues to evolve today.

Today our role is:

- Policy development and public advocacy on behalf of the Returned & Services League (the League) and our members
- To promote and shape the reputation and public perceptions of veterans
- To deliver, lead and facilitate high quality veteran services
- To present and support commemoration activities
- Provide governance, compliance and risk management leadership
- Engaging the community through two major fundraising appeals, the ANZAC Appeal and the Poppy Appeal
- Sub-Branch and member support as well as advice to the network
- Leadership in living the values and culture of the League
- Advocate for veterans to get the entitlements they deserve.

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE RSL IN VICTORIA – 2022

**182,890** total number of RSL members



Member Type	2022	2021
Service members	22,744	23,259
Life members	407	427
Affiliate members	43,690	43,492
Social members	108,911	107,926
Community members	7,138	8,056



Gender	2022	2021
Male	101,388	101,444
Female	81,502	81,716

# RSL VICTORIA

## TIMELINE 1916–1990

**3 JUNE 1916**

The Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (R.S.S.I.L.A.) is established with various returned soldier organisations in several states adopting a unified approach in advocating for veterans of the Great War and providing repatriation and medical services to returned service personnel in need.

**11–16 SEPTEMBER 1916**

First R.S.S.I.L.A. Congress is held with delegates from Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, and Victoria attending.

**DECEMBER 1916**

Membership of the Returned Soldiers' Association in Victoria exceeds 5,000, necessitating new clubrooms. Three floors are secured in Columbia Building in Swanston Street, opposite the Cathedral.

**FEBRUARY 1917**

The R.S.S.I.L.A. Victorian Branch took over three floors in Alexander's Buildings at 27 Swanston Street near Flinders Lane.

**JUNE 1917**

The official opening of the new Melbourne headquarters of the R.S.S.I.L.A. in Swanston Street takes place.

**11 NOVEMBER 1919**

On the first anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that ceased hostilities in the Great War, Sergeant J. Jarvis sound his bugle from the roof of ANZAC House "over the silent city."

**6 FEBRUARY 1920**

The tender of Mr S. Armstrong for the erection of a five-storey clubhouse at the rear of ANZAC House was accepted by the trustees for the amount of £31,000.

**22 AUGUST 1920**

A crowd of 300 people witness the laying of the foundation stone of the ANZAC Memorial House memorial building that was being erected at the rear of ANZAC House in Collins Street.

**JULY 1921**

With nurses forming a sub-section of the R.S.S.I.L.A., they are soon to obtain club accommodation at ANZAC House. It is noted that there were many issues affecting the welfare of nurses which still required attention, for which ANZAC House would be of benefit.

**11 NOVEMBER 1921**

A ceremony is held outside ANZAC House with more than 300 returned soldiers and their fathers attending as The Last Post is sounded by a bugler standing on the balcony of ANZAC House. About 200 women also joined the gathering, mostly mothers and widows of fallen soldiers.

**MARCH 1922**

An exhibition is held at ANZAC House highlighting the high standard of workmanship gained by both town and country returned men under the returned soldiers' industrial, settlement and vocational training scheme.

**25 APRIL 1922**

ANZAC Day provides the occasion for the official opening of ANZAC House. Returned men are joined by bereaved mothers and sisters and returned nurses.

**AUGUST 1922**

One hundred and fifty bronze memorial plaques are presented by Lord Stradbroke, Governor of Victoria, to the next of kin of fallen soldiers of the Great War on the eighth anniversary of the declaration of war.

**9 NOVEMBER 1923**

The Association of Sailors and Soldiers' Womenfolk present new flags to be flown at ANZAC House. The four flags are: the Union Jack, the Australian flag, the Red Ensign and the Australian Mercantile Marine flag.

**22 APRIL 1925**

The Australian Imperial League of Soldiers' and Sailors' Womenfolk present the trustees of the ANZAC House with 52 flags representing Victorian battalions of the AIF. After being carried in the march on ANZAC Day, the flags then permanently decorate the walls of ANZAC House.

**3 JULY 1928**

Unemployed diggers receive assistance from the ANZAC House Employment Bureau. Vegetables are handed out to those in need. Ten tonnes of produce were supplied by the soldiers settlers at Bunyip in aid of the city comrades.

**26 APRIL 1930**

General Sir Henry Chauvel, recently retired from his position of inspector-general of the forces, is presented with an inscribed badge of the League. Chauvel had been in command of the Light Horse and Camel Corps in Palestine during the Great War.

**20 JUNE 1930**

Amy Johnson, British-born aviator, lays a wreath on the memorial tablet in the entrance to ANZAC House. Johnson is in Australia after her record-breaking solo flight from England.

**19 JANUARY 1932**

The military funeral of Captain Albert Jacka VC MC and Bar begins at ANZAC House. Thousands of mourners file past the coffin, paying tribute and laying wreaths before a ticketed memorial service is conducted.

**9 NOVEMBER 1934**

Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, third son of King George V, accompanied by the Governor of Victoria, Lord Huntingfield, visits ANZAC House.

**DECEMBER 1936**

ANZAC House is sold for £70,000 to the Australasian Temperance and General Mutual Life Assurance Society Ltd. The trustees of ANZAC House noted the unsuitability and alteration expense of the existing building. Through public subscriptions, sufficient money was raised in 1919 to purchase the existing building for £38,000.

**JANUARY 1937**

A new building for ANZAC House is announced with the Victorian branch of the League purchasing vacant land at Nos. 2 and 4 Collins Street for £19,000.

**MARCH 1937**

Mr Stanley T. Parkes, veteran of Gallipoli and Palestine, of the firm Messrs Oakley and Parkes of Bourke Street is appointed architect for the new ANZAC House to be erected at Nos. 4–6 Collins Street in the city.

**JULY 1937**

The design of the new ANZAC House building is announced to the public. Construction is to commence in October 1937 and is expected to take nine months.

**NOVEMBER 1937**

It is announced that the new ANZAC House building at 4–6 Collins Street is to be built by Gallipoli veteran and former President of the Dandenong Sub-Branch, Mr Norman Taylor.

**13 JULY 1938**

The new ANZAC House is officially opened. Built and furnished at a cost of £39,00. Upon the facade is a sculptured figure symbolising Peace with Honour.

**DECEMBER 1939**

At a meeting at ANZAC House of Melbourne representatives of ex-soldiers, it is unanimously decided to form an RSL War Service Fund in Victoria for the purpose of supplying comforts to soldiers in camp and on active service.

**NOVEMBER 1940**

With the outbreak of the Second World War and the Royal Australian Air Force now part of Australia's serving forces, the League undergoes a name change to represent the three services. The League would now be known as Returned Sailors Soldiers and Airmens' Imperial League of Australia (R.S.S.A.I.L.A.).

**SEPTEMBER 1941**

During the year ending June 30, the RSL War Service Fund in Victoria raised and donated £39,000 to the Australian Comforts Fund to spend on the men of the fighting forces overseas. Goods also received for the Fund include gloves, scarves, pullovers, mittens, caps, socks, neck muffs, and balaclavas.

**15 OCTOBER 1946**

An exhibition is held at ANZAC House of photographs of thousands of Australian servicemen who passed through New York during the Second World War. The photograph album had been lent to ANZAC House by Miss Nola Luxford, founder of the ANZAC Club in New York.

**SEPTEMBER 1952**

The RSL in Victoria announces plans to launch its own hospital benefits scheme, and 84,000 members are expected to take part in the scheme.

**OCTOBER 1952**

The Victorian branch of the RSL submits a motion to the Federal Congress of the RSL requesting the Minister for Repatriation to include all mental illnesses of returned servicemen and women as being due to war services.

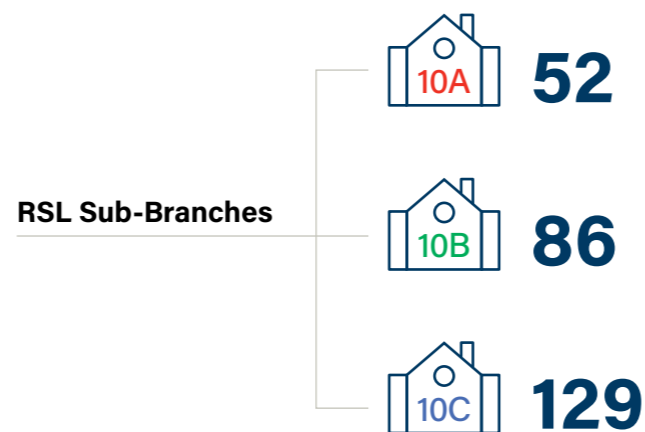
**OCTOBER 1954**

The RSL in Victoria seeks support for the introduction of legislation that would compel a defined percentage of returned men for employers with more than 20 male employees.



# RSL VICTORIA SUB-BRANCHES IN 2022

# 267



**There are 267 RSL Sub-Branches across Victoria.**

RSL Victoria's professional Sub-Branch network, comprised of By-Law 10A (10A), By-Law 10B (10B) and By-Law 10C (10C) Sub-Branches provide a place of community and connection for veterans and their families. RSL Sub-Branches are the front facing point of contact for veterans: a welcoming space and often a place where a veteran's wellbeing journey commences and is maintained throughout.



## OUR SUB-BRANCHES



### 10A Sub-Branches

These Sub-Branches perform all the required roles of an RSL Sub-Branch and additionally operate with a commercial hospitality offering additional obligations to the community.



VETERAN SUPPORT



COMMEMORATION



HOSPITALITY AND ENTERTAINMENT



### 10B Sub-Branches

These Sub-Branches perform all the required roles of an RSL Sub-Branch and additionally operate limited food and/or beverage services.



VETERAN SUPPORT



COMMEMORATION



LIMITED HOSPITALITY



### 10C Sub-Branches

These Sub-Branches perform all the required roles of an RSL Sub-Branch.



VETERAN SUPPORT



COMMEMORATION

## OPERATIONAL MODEL

RSL Sub-Branches all operate under a federated model regardless of which by-law applies to them. Each Sub-Branch is well equipped to meet its objectives and comply with legislative and regulatory obligations.

Federations are formed to unite and align state-based organisations around the aims of a national organisation and to maximise efficiencies by pooling resources and working together. Federations work best when the majority of the business of the association is conducted at the State level.

The federated model brings governance closer to the members, with elected representatives better able to represent Sub-Branch interests. The model allows for increased flexibility, with 'independent' states given more freedom to choose how their members are served.

## OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND REPRESENTATION

RSL Victoria's mission involves meeting the challenges of the current operating environment and servicing the changing needs of veterans in proactive and modern ways. To achieve this, we attempt to strike a balance that always places veterans and their families at the centre of our efforts but also recognises that the minimal funding we receive from government necessitates the use of commercial operations to ensure the delivery of our crucially important services.

The RSL in Victoria delivers gaming operations responsibly, carefully and with frequent review. The overwhelming majority (215 out of 267) of Sub-Branches do not operate gaming.

The Chief Operations Officer and Senior Manager — Network Service & Support represent the Sub-Branches on various hospitality-related industry reference groups, forums and advisory committees, including:

- Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) Responsible Gambling Ministerial Advisory Committee
- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Gambling Industry Leaders' Forum
- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Land-Based Gaming Industry Forum
- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Venue Support Program Advisory Committee
- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation Gambling Harm Awareness Week Advisory Committee.

In addition to the above, RSL Victoria representatives attend:

- Quarterly meetings with the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission CEO and Directors
- Bi-yearly meetings with the Victorian Government Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation.



# REFLECTIONS OF A YAMATJI VETERAN

**Writer**  
Aileen Phillips

**Photos**  
Ernesto Arriagada

**Brett West's Indigenous origins are from Western Australia, his traditional lands in a place called Gutharraguda (Shark Bay). He enlisted in the RAAF in 1987, qualifying as an Armoured Technician, working with aircraft and the associated weapons systems. He went on to weapons engineering and a specialisation in explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), or more commonly known as the bomb squad.**

During his time in the RAAF, Brett worked in logistics, engineering and teaching.

"Later on in my career was when it actually morphed a little further than that and then it was actually for my Aboriginality, it was for my culture, it was for community."

Motivated by wanting to not only serve his country but his community and people, Brett made conscious strides to hone his Defence career into one that would achieve just that.

Brett's primary focus is now on contributing to the betterment of outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, working with the Victorian Department of Education and Training in the Koorie Outcomes Division.

He also generously provides his time to the RSL, as part of our process to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans.



Scan to read  
the full story  
online



# RSL VICTORIA'S RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN (RAP)

RSL Victoria celebrates the stories, cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of all Victorian communities and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and defenders of country throughout the State. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Approximately 3% of the Australian Defence Force and 2.8% of Australian veterans identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Developing and growing relationships is fundamental to improving our services and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service veterans and their families.

RSL Victoria aspires to be reflective of the values of a modern Australia, built on the work and sacrifice of countless Australians who have come before us. We are committed to promoting reconciliation and creating a culturally safe and inclusive workplace for all members, volunteers, veterans and staff. As part of this commitment, a Reconciliation Plan (RAP) is being created and implemented, sourced from structures provided by Reconciliation Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan Framework.

The expectations of this framework are:

- The establishment of an effective governance structure, including a RAP Working Group
- The determination of RSL Victoria's vision for reconciliation
- The scope of the RAP and reflection on how RSL Victoria can contribute to reconciliation
- Improved relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and relevant stakeholders
- To build understanding of who, how, why and when to seek guidance and consultation
- The preparation of business cases to senior leaders for future reconciliation initiatives
- Not necessarily expected to make changes to policies or internal operations.

2022 saw significant steps towards the drafting and completion of the RAP, with a Working Group established comprised of staff from across RSL Victoria and other individuals, including Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) veteran, current educator with the Victorian Department of Education and Training in the Koorie Outcomes Division and proud Yamatji man, Brett West.

The Working Group's goals for 2022 were to collaborate openly and develop a draft RAP that aligned with the goals of a modern and changing RSL organisation and all those connected to it.

Considerable work went into the drafting of the plan throughout the year to ensure that the delivery of future services and support is authentic and aware. Reconciliation Australia, the lead body for reconciliation in Australia, received our submission in November 2022.

Reconciliation Australia recommended only minor changes to RSL Victoria's RAP plan, an outcome that bodes well for the success of the RAP plan's second forthcoming draft, which already appears to have no significant impediment to eventual approval by the reconciliation body.

RSL Victoria is proud to live on the land of the oldest continuous culture in the world — a culture that dates back over 65,000 years, fought for and preserved as part of the efforts of our brave servicemen and women. We celebrate, commemorate and support all who have served including all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen and women, past and present.

Efforts continue to ensure the successful and effective endorsement and implementation of the RAP in 2023.

# ROYAL COMMISSION INTO DEFENCE AND VETERAN SUICIDE

## ABOUT THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO DEFENCE AND VETERAN SUICIDE

Royal Commissions are the highest form of inquiry on issues of public importance. The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide was established in July 2021 to look into the high rates of suicide in Defence and veteran communities and make recommendations to government as well as exploring potential changes that can be made.

RSL Victoria believes that the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran suicide is long overdue and continued to support its work throughout 2022.

## ROYAL COMMISSION INTERIM REPORT

The Interim Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide was released on 11 August 2022. The report reflected the Royal Commission's learnings from eight hearings, 2,000 submissions, 178 private sessions and testimony from 208 witnesses.

The Interim Report provided commentary on the following:

- A summary of work undertaken
- Preliminary observations
- Recommendations about urgent and immediate issues.

The Interim Report made 13 urgent recommendations.

In September, the Federal Government responded, implementing one of the 13 recommendations, agreeing to nine, agreeing in principle to one, and noting two others.

RSL Australia, in collaboration with State and Territory Branches of the RSL, responded to the Interim Report in September 2022. The RSL expressed support for the Commissioner's recommendations and calls for legislative reform, to improve claims processing at the Department of Veterans' Affairs and to increase protections for those engaging with the Royal Commission.

## ABOUT THE WORKING GROUP

RSL Victoria's Working Group was formed in 2021 to formulate RSL Victoria's response to the Interim Report, contribute to RSL Australia's collaborative national response, prepare for the Victorian Royal Commission Hearing Block, to be held in August 2023, and to continue to share with the Royal Commission Team issues that are faced specifically by Victorian veterans and their families. This work is ongoing.

The Working Group is comprised of veterans from both within and outside of the State Branch. It is currently chaired by Lindsay Guerin, a member of the RSL Victoria State Executive, but features independent members to hear the widest range of veterans' views and experiences possible.

In 2022, RSL Victoria continued working to help drive reform. We look forward to being an open and collaborative part of the solution when Victoria's Royal Commission Hearing Block sessions begin in August 2023.

## RSL VICTORIA INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

RSL Victoria's website features a hub with easy access to all Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide information. Updated regularly as Hearing Blocks took place across the country throughout the year, all news, updates and hearing block summaries are linked, as well as RSL Victoria's submission to the Royal Commission, information on where veterans can find support as well as links to all relevant sources outside of the RSL network, such as the Royal Commission Interim Report and more.

RSL Victoria can help connect members of the ADF and veterans with counselling and mental health support as well as direct welfare, advocacy and wellbeing services.

**Victorian veterans in need of support can contact their local Sub-Branch or RSL Victoria's Veteran Central between the hours of 9:00am-5:00pm Monday to Friday via 1300 MILVET (1300 645 838).**

Visit [rslvic.com.au/veteran-support/royal-commission](https://rslvic.com.au/veteran-support/royal-commission) for all information regarding the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.



# CONTROLLING YOUR OUTCOME: JOEL SARDI

Writer  
Aileen Phillips

Photos  
Robert Blackburn

**Joel Sardi was 19 and eager to travel and learn about himself. He joined the Army and started a position with infantry. At 21 years old, he deployed to Afghanistan where his wartime experiences opened his eyes to the world.**

On Saturday night 31 August 2014, returned home and facing life as a soldier in civilian society, a paralysing fall changed everything.

Airlifted to Melbourne, Joel spent a year in hospital. Unable to manoeuvre around his home easily, the RSL, led by the Greensborough Sub-Branch, provided financial assistance for accessibility renovations, family support and most of the travel expenses to a specialised rehabilitation clinic in America. Without the RSL's assistance, Joel is convinced his life wouldn't be where it is today.

Joel found the love of his life in Elisa, and personal contentment as the father of two young girls. Recently, he has taken the public speaking circuit by storm and finds it rewarding to help people through conversation.

Joel said, "Everybody goes through adversity, it's unmissable, it's unavoidable, but you can come out from it as a constructive, somewhat positive person by harnessing your perspective."



Scan to read  
the full story  
online



# VETERAN SUPPORT

For over 100 years, RSL Victoria has supported the wellbeing of veterans and their families by providing advocacy, wellbeing and community support.

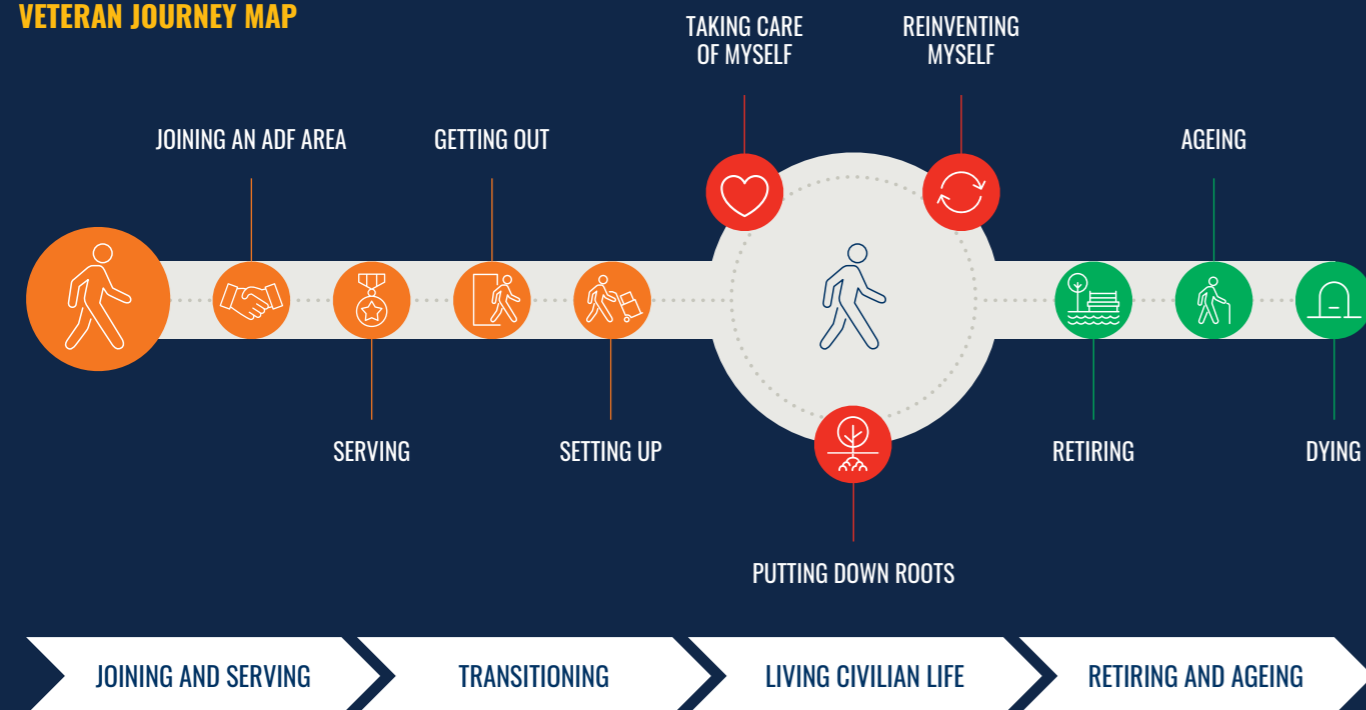
RSL Victoria is committed to proactively creating and maintaining a supportive, trusted and enduring relationship with Victorian veterans and their families. Our approach is to provide connection at any life stage to see veterans and their families through any challenge and support them to enjoy life, experience meaning, and connect with others.

**RSL Victoria provides services and supports our Sub-Branch network in line with our Resilient Veteran Strategy 2021–2026.**

The pillars of that strategy are:

- **Collaborative leadership:** Leading cross-sector engagement to unify wellbeing supports that reflect the diverse needs of Victorian veterans and their families.
- **Connectivity:** Proactively empowering veterans and their families to attain a place of connection and belonging within the veteran and general community.
- **Effective services:** Credible, safe, and evidence-informed programs and service navigation.
- **Lifelong commitment:** Proactively creating and maintaining a supportive, trusted and enduring relationship with Victorian veterans and their families from the moment they join ADF and focusing on vulnerable stages of a veteran's life.

## VETERAN JOURNEY MAP



## VETERAN CENTRAL

Veteran Central is a point of connection for veterans and their families to be able to access services from RSL Victoria and other ex-service organisations, state government-funded community agencies, community groups and governments to get the support they need to maintain their wellbeing.

Veteran Central assists veterans and their families to navigate the service eco-system and link them to the services they need. Fundamental to this navigation is to properly assess and understand the needs of the veteran using a strengths-based approach.

When a veteran or the family member of a veteran makes contact (via visiting one of our Veterans & Families Hubs, calling 1300 645 838, or submitting an online form), they will talk with a Wellbeing Navigator about their current circumstances, what their future needs are and how to connect them with all available services.

Our Veteran Central Team is headed by a mental health social worker and are experts in connecting veterans and their families to supports, within the ex-service organisation sector, community, or government.

### SUPPORT TO SUB-BRANCHES

Veteran Central also supports our Sub-Branch wellbeing volunteer network to work with veterans:

- 59 Wellbeing Advocates
- 18 Wellbeing Advocate Mentors
- Over 80 Wellbeing Support Officers.

We operate a Learning and Development program (see page 22) and the Veteran Central Team provides professional advice to the network of wellbeing advocates to ensure they can safely support any veteran they work with, even if their needs are complex.

### EDUCATING AND CONNECTING TO SERVICE PROVIDERS

Veteran Central also works to educate public and community health services on the needs of, and supports available to, veterans.

We accept referrals to our team from a range of different providers and encourage veterans and families to make use of a range of external providers. This is especially important as a transition step if veterans or their families are not aware of public or community health agencies in Victoria who can help them.

RSL Victoria is proud to work with the following external providers:





# COMPENSATION ADVOCACY

Advocacy is an act of making representations on behalf of another to ensure that they receive a fair hearing of their case or an outcome they seek. In the context of RSL Victoria, a large part of the work is providing support to veterans and current serving ADF personnel who are seeking entitlements, based on their service, from the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA).

RSL Victoria's Advocates play a vital role in the support of veterans throughout Victoria. The compensation support provided by RSL Victoria's Advocates is free of charge to all members of the serving and ex-service community in Victoria.

Based on information provided by Sub-Branches in 2022, the RSL Sub-Branch network contains:

<b>71</b> Compensation Advocates	<b>59</b> Wellbeing Advocates
<b>13</b> Compensation Support Officers	<b>80</b> Wellbeing Support Officers

*RSL Victoria's advocacy work changes lives.*

In 2022, RSL Victoria's State Branch Advocates:

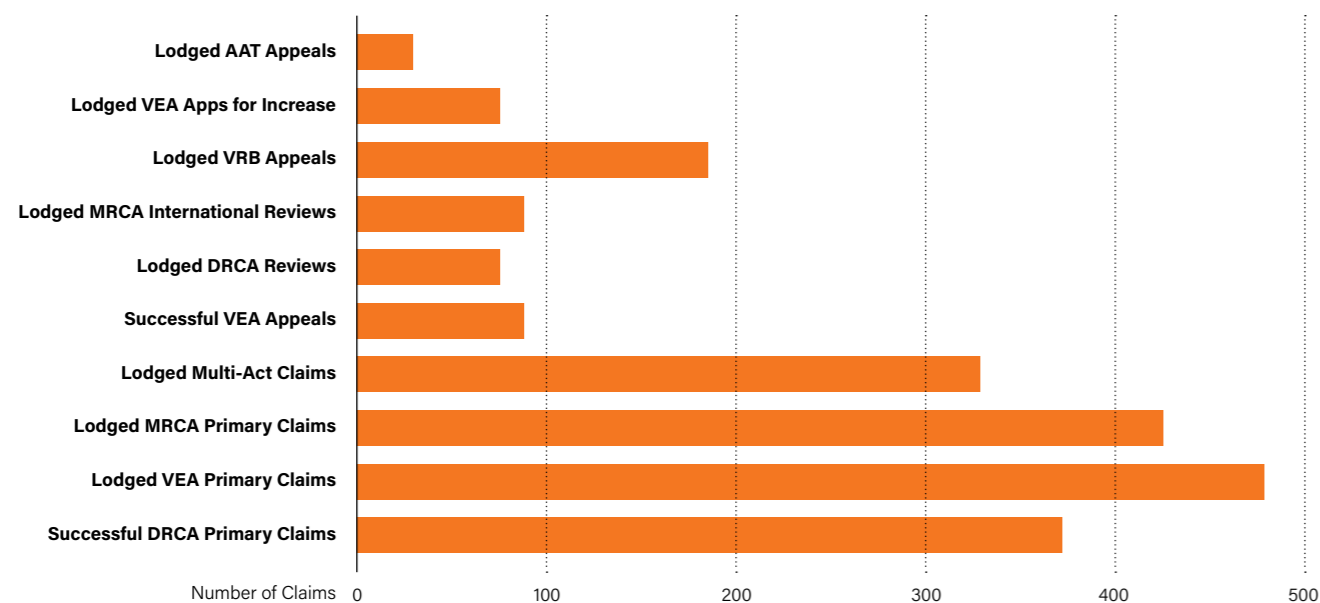
<b>Worked with</b> <b>843</b> new clients	<b>Submitted</b> <b>591</b> claims	<b>Submitted</b> <b>108</b> appeals
---	--	---

**86%**  
average success rate

Note: RSL Victoria provides advice to clients on the feasibility of a claim, but the final decision on whether to submit is the client's own.

Achieved  
**\$22,413,881**  
in compensation for the impact of our clients' injuries

## RSL VICTORIA 2022 COMPENSATION ADVOCACY



# WELLBEING & COMPENSATION SERVICES

In 2022 Veteran Central worked with 1,067\* veterans or family members who requested support directly, through a Sub-Branch or via our Veterans Service Organisation community.

Of our veterans:

<b>16%</b> had Navy service	<b>56%</b> had Army service	<b>11%</b> had Air Force service	<b>14%</b> are early service leavers with under four years of service	<b>62%</b> were operationally deployed
<b>17%</b> are immediate family members of a veteran	<b>15%</b> of our clients are women	<b>53%</b> were medically or administratively discharged		
<b>5.8%</b> identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	<b>Our clients represent all age categories</b>	<b>6%</b> identified as homeless or lacking permanent accommodation		

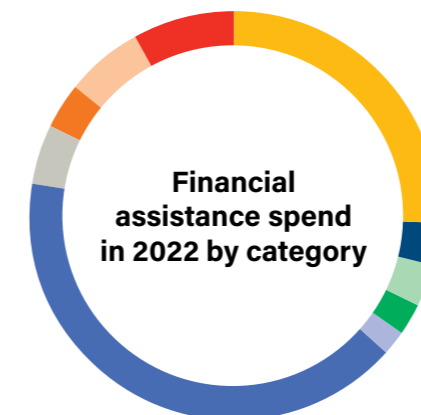
\*Figures taken from client relationship management system, Salesforce. This system is used by our Wellbeing staff associated with State Branch, including our five Veterans & Family Hubs. There were many additional veterans or family members we worked with in 2022 recorded on our Better Impact client relationship management system, which is operated by our Sub-Branch network. There are also Sub-Branches who operate their own record-keeping systems and do not make use of the Better Impact system. Over the next phase of the Resilient Veteran Strategy, our programs aim to encourage full digitisation of record-keeping at Sub-Branches and encourage Sub-Branches to adopt a licence for the Salesforce system.

## 2022 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BY CATEGORY

In 2022 RSL Victoria issued \$258,844 worth of financial assistance grants to veterans and their families. An additional \$8,803 worth of food vouchers were also given out.

The total financial assistance spend in 2022 was:

**\$267,648**



<b>Debt relief</b>	<b>\$68,893</b>	<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>\$109,543</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>\$9,156</b>	<b>Relocation expenses</b>	<b>\$12,596</b>
<b>Food vouchers</b>	<b>\$8,804</b>	<b>Home maintenance</b>	<b>\$9,415</b>
<b>Funeral expenses</b>	<b>\$6,332</b>	<b>Motor vehicle expenses</b>	<b>\$17,041</b>
<b>Medical expenses</b>	<b>\$5,036</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>\$20,832</b>



# OUR COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

## CLIENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

RSL Victoria has invested in the creation of a records management system to securely collect and centralise veteran information. This project will enable increased accuracy in our reporting and further inform our advocacy efforts.

In 2022 we were able to implement the following as part of Phase One:

- Undertook intakes and Health and Wellbeing Assessments with clients
- Create referrals to internal programs (Aged Care, Compensation Advocacy, Veteran Employment Program (VEP), Financial Assistance)
- Create referrals to external organisations or track when information is provided to clients on these organisations
- Share key information collected through intake on internal program referrals (such as Service Information, DVA information, Emergency Contacts)
- Digitisation of privacy consent: ability to send our privacy consent through intake and once completed by client the record is updated in the records system
- Customer enquiry to intake: enquiries submitted through the website are automatically created as an intake in the records system
- Deployment of VEP Surveys and Wellbeing Surveys through integration into the records system
- Centralisation of activity and emails leveraging the in-built email sender, and the email integration tool

- Automation of VEP Surveys, automated VEP follow-up tasks
- Dashboards (visual charts) to showcase Service Delivery, Staff Productivity and Data Quality, VEP Program Engagement, Financial Assistance, Compensation Advocacy
- Historical data import (migration of records from old system, Excel, DVA) to records system
- Change management and rollout of records system to all Veteran Services staff (29 at present).

## RSL VICTORIA REPRESENTATION

RSL Victoria holds positions on a number of different boards, committees and other relevant groups to represent the interests of veterans and collaboratively work towards a united voice on the issues affecting veterans and their families. RSL Victoria is present at the following:

- Veterans Service Organisation (VSO) Round Table
- National Veterans' Affairs Committee
- DVA Deputy Commissioner quarterly briefing
- Victorian Veterans Council (VVC)
- Victorian Public Service Veterans' Employment Program
- DVA National Veterans and Families Wellbeing Centre Working Group
- National RSL Veterans' Employment Working Group
- Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT)
- Trustee on the Shrine of Remembrance Board
- Australian Defence Force Transition Seminars.

# CREATING A PLACE OF SAFETY: THE OPENING OF THE VETERANS & FAMILIES HUB WODONGA

Veterans & Families Hubs are safe centres for veterans and their families to easily connect with various compensation advocacy, wellbeing support and training and education support programs. These centres provide a welcoming environment to all veterans and their families.

Prior to 2022, four such Hubs existed, located in Frankston, Geelong, Warrnambool and Melbourne.

The fifth of RSL Victoria's Veterans & Families Hubs was named in honour of Tim Fischer AC. It officially opened in Wodonga on 6 December 2022, with the range of services accessible in 2023.

Located at 149 High Street Wodonga, the Veterans & Families Hub Wodonga provides a place of safety and connection for the large veteran community in Wodonga and surrounds and linkage to a with a wide range of onsite services.

The highly accessible Hub also provides an upgraded and much-expanded space and facilities for staff moving over from the Hume Veterans' Information Centre to continue their vital work with veterans.

Guests at the well-attended Opening Day of RSL Victoria's newest Hub included dignitaries from the Federal Government, Australian Defence Force, the local council and ex-service organisations, and there was clear enthusiasm for the Hub and its future prospects.

Completed thanks to a \$5 million grant from the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Veterans & Families Hub Wodonga is staffed by a Veteran Central Wellbeing Navigator, a Centre Coordinator and a team of volunteer Wellbeing and Compensation Advocates who will assist veterans from Wodonga and surrounding areas.

In 2022, the team originally working at The Hume Veterans' Information Centre and subsequently at the Veterans & Families Hub Wodonga received 193 new clients.

This figure proves both the value and need for the brand-new facility for veterans and their families across the area.



From L to R: COL Clare Kellaway, Sue Cattermole (RSL Victoria CEO), the Hon. Matt Keogh MP (Minister for Veterans Affairs, Minister for Defence Personnel), Benjamin Webb (RSL Victoria Acting Chief of Veteran Services), Judy Brewer AO, Dr Rob Webster OAM (RSL Victoria President), Helen Haines MP (Member for Indi), Rob Swanwick (Veteran Families Advisor)



# VOLUNTEER SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

In 2021, RSL Victoria recognised the need to ensure that staff and volunteers are trained to provide mental health and trauma-informed support.

The project entered a developmental year in 2022. Throughout the year, volunteers from across the network hosted training events for RSL Victoria's volunteers and paid staff as well as other veteran service organisations. Over 300 employees and 400 volunteers attended throughout the State. The majority of these volunteers were Sub-Branch Welfare Support Officers, Wellbeing Advocates or Compensation Advocates, with Sub-Branch committee members, Appeals Officers and volunteers from other assorted roles also attending and participating.

In total, representatives from

# 108

Sub-Branches attended Learning and Development training sessions.

In addition to the VSD Learning and Development Program, the team collaborated with Open Arms and RSL Australia to support Sub-Branches to host the Open Arms suite of suicide prevention training programs. This is referred to as the Mental Health Initiative.

A total of

# 272

attended Mental Health Initiative workshops across 22 events.

These workshops were:

- **Suicide Prevention START** (90-minute online suicide prevention training)
- **safeTALK** (half-day suicide prevention training)
- **Mental Health First Aid Workshop** (mental health literacy training)
- **ASIST** (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training).

In 2022 the RSL Victoria network had 71 Compensation Advocates and 59 Wellbeing Advocates. We have committed to support our network of Advocates to gain and maintain their Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP) currency. The ATDP qualification is coordinated through the Department of Veterans' Affairs and allows veterans and their families a guarantee of minimal level of qualifications and up-to-date knowledge of the Advocate working with them. Advocates are required to undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) each year, and those in training work with a Mentor to gain their qualifications.

RSL Victoria supports approximately 27 Advocates in various stages of training for ATDP qualifications, with an ATDP qualified RSL Mentor. Our Learning and Development Program provided training endorsed for CPD points for Advocates to meet their CPD requirements.



## VETERAN EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

The RSL's Veteran Employment Program (VEP) supports veterans and their immediate family to find meaningful employment. The program also offers career and financial counselling, interview coaching and mental health support services. The VEP is funded by a national Commonwealth (DVA) grant administered via RSL Australia and is wholly delivered via the State Branches. Supporting veterans and their families to find meaningful employment is fundamental to RSL Victoria's efforts to ensure veterans' wellbeing and resiliency throughout their lives post-service.

The VEP had

# 273

expressions of interest in 2022

Of these:

Approximately

**50%** of those who expressed interest entered the program.

Those who do not enter the program are provided information and referral to other appropriate programs (such as non-veteran programs if they do not have a service background) or are provided assistance through the Veteran Central service if in need.

**37%** of those who entered the program reached their work goal.

**39%** were referred to our specialist career support provider, Right Management.

**39%** receive support from the VEP in addition to other RSL Victoria programs.

**13%** receive financial assistance and wellbeing support.

**68%** receive compensation advocacy support.

**11%** receive financial assistance, wellbeing, and compensation advocacy support.



# RSL ACTIVE

**RSL Active is a program that provides a range of events and activities for the younger veteran community supported by funding from the Victorian Government. With events held both virtually and in person, 2022 saw a wide range of activities held on regular weekly, bi-weekly or monthly schedules.**

Events in 2022 included yoga, art classes, walks, hiking, meditation and mindfulness classes, fishing, dragon boat racing, cooking, rock climbing, social engagement and much more. An RSL team proudly claimed silver medals at the 2022 Toyota Wheelchair AFL National Championship tournament.

In 2022, 290 veterans participated in RSL Active events and activities run by RSL Victoria. The regular RSL Active newsletter has 550 subscribers.

2022 saw increased growth in the number of Sub-Branches hosting regular events with 12 RSL Sub-Branches involved, including the State Branch. Those Sub-Branches were: Altona, Bentleigh, Greensborough, Warrnambool, Inverloch, Rosebud, Mildura, Warragul, and sessions run by the combined efforts of Melton, Ballan and Bacchus Marsh. This is an increase from the five Sub-Branches running events in 2021, further showcasing the increased involvement and confidence of the network as we further emerged from COVID-19 restrictions that hampered much activity in recent years.

Although anonymised, the below feedback comes from RSL Active participants.

I have had quite a few experiences with RSL Active and I think they are an amazing organisation doing a lot for the veteran community.

Opportunity to meet new people and try variety of activities in supportive environment. Active and inclusive.

Love being part of the RSL Active community.

It has been such a good experience finding like-minded people ex-ADF and currently serving. Being able to share our stories and enjoying their company doing activities together.

RSL Active provides a safe and supportive community for RSL members to focus on their health and wellbeing.

My RSL Active is well organised and always fun.

The program has enabled me to stay fit and active, develop mates and socialise with like-minded people.

The program has expanded to a larger number of locations statewide and offers a greater number of varied activities.





# VOLUNTEERING

**In 2022, RSL Victoria continued our practice of seeking to not only support veterans, but also to be a volunteer-led organisation providing veterans and community members opportunities to directly support veterans and their families.**

RSL volunteers are both the heart and the connective tissue of the RSL in Victoria. Many have given through Australian Defence Force (ADF) service and remarkably continue to serve through their work with RSL Victoria, alongside a diverse team of volunteers that includes veteran families, friends, local communities and the wider Victorian population. They are an inspiring, hard-working group of proud, big-hearted individuals who give their time to the RSL across a wide range of vital services and activities.

As we celebrate our community's work in the year gone by, we proudly highlight the extraordinary efforts of our volunteers, who re-emerged en masse in 2022 as the restrictions brought on by the pandemic lessened. Data from the Australian National University Centre for Social Research and Methods suggested that voluntary work was even more greatly impacted by COVID-19 than paid work, so the resurgence of the RSL in Victoria's volunteer network in 2022 is even more commendable.

On the opposite page you can see just how the thoughtful, generous work of RSL volunteers strengthened and increased over the year prior, particularly as we returned to relatively normal ANZAC Day commemorative activities across the State.

Note that the number of volunteers recorded on this page is the number of registered volunteers on RSL Victoria's Volunteer Management System, Better Impact, and is only indicative of roughly 40% of actual volunteer activity.



2022	2021	2022	2021		
Total number of registered volunteers	<b>6,732</b>	<b>3,079</b>	Hours dedicated to commemoration and heritage projects		
Total number of volunteer hours	<b>250,182</b>	<b>186,252</b>	<b>16,762</b>	<b>11,887</b>	
Hours given to the annual Poppy ANZAC and Poppy Appeals	<b>34,551</b>	<b>28,774</b>	Hours given to coordination of DVA day club activities	<b>4,832</b>	<b>1,745</b>
Hours given to providing Sub-Branch administration and management	<b>93,550</b>	<b>69,243</b>	Hours given to providing wellbeing support for veterans	<b>5,880</b>	<b>3,115</b>
Hours given to providing support for local community events and initiatives	<b>16,001</b>	<b>11,573</b>	Hours given for women's auxilliary	<b>49,269</b>	<b>38,139</b>
			Hours providing compensation advocacy service	<b>29,074</b>	<b>23,846</b>



# FUNDRAISING



**ANZAC Appeal**  
2021  
\$3,897,094

2022  
**\$3,931,885**



**Poppy Appeal**  
2021  
\$2,667,820

2022  
**\$3,073,128**

## OUR ANZAC AND POPPY APPEALS PARTNERS

RSL Victoria would like to thank our ANZAC Appeal and Poppy Appeal partners and supporter organisations for helping us to raise the much-needed money and awareness for the Victorian veteran community:

- Australian Defence Force personnel, especially from HMAS Cerberus, Victoria Barracks, Defence Plaza Melbourne, RAAF Williams and Simpson Barracks
- Australian Football League
- Essendon Football Club
- Collingwood Football Club
- Richmond Football Club
- Melbourne Football Club
- Melbourne Cricket Club
- Melbourne Victory
- Melbourne Ice
- Sherrin
- Collingwood Netball Club
- Melbourne Rebels
- Melbourne Storm
- Melbourne United
- Officeworks
- Woolworths
- Racing Victoria
- Victorian Racing Club
- Tixstar



## ANNUAL APPEALS

"Welcome back!" was a popular greeting to so many of RSL's volunteers during the 2022 annual appeals; a year in which our fundraisers excitedly returned to warmly connective in-person efforts. Sub-Branch Appeals Officers, committees and volunteers right across the network spent months planning for both appeals and enthusiastically hit the streets once again to meet the Victorian community that so generously supports both the ANZAC Appeal and Poppy Appeal each and every year.

The difference between the Appeals' fundraising totals of 2022 and 2021 and their correlation to the impact of lockdowns and COVID-19 restrictions can most clearly be seen in the 2022 Poppy Appeal, where even against the backdrop of surging inflation and a cost-of-living crisis, Victorians restriction-free and completely out and about once more rallied to support our mission.

**100% of funds raised through the ANZAC Appeal and Poppy Appeal supports veterans and their families in times of need.**

The continued adoption and employment of EFTPOS terminals by our Sub-Branched to a public increasingly used to tap-and-go technology continued to grow, with most participating Sub-Branched reporting that 'digital giving' is resulting in higher overall total donations.

For more on the efforts of our extraordinary volunteers from right around the RSL network, please see page 26.

## APPEALS FORUMS

The easing of COVID-19 restrictions also allowed RSL Victoria's educational Appeals Forums to take place with forums conducted over August and September.

Our well-attended Appeals Forums facilitate learning and an open exchange of ideas between attendees to develop and grow our fundraising activities. Participating Sub-Branched included:

- Romsey
- Shepparton
- Ballarat
- Colac
- Bairnsdale
- Traralgon
- Chelsea (Longbeach)
- ANZAC House

## BEQUEST PROGRAM

RSL Victoria's Gifts in Wills program was launched in 2020. The program identified supporters of the RSL's work who were willing and had capacity to leave a lasting legacy in their will as well many who wished to receive more information. RSL Victoria continues to be humbled by the response received from so many of our loyal and longstanding members.

**In the 2022 reporting year, RSL Victoria gratefully received bequests totalling**

**\$84,040**





# COMMEMORATION

## ANZAC DAY

On 25 April 2022, over 50,000 Victorians returned to the ANZAC Day Dawn Service at the Shrine of Remembrance in an expression of mass gratitude for the men and women of the Australian and New Zealand Defence Forces as part of ANZAC Day commemorations held right across the State.

The strong public support was attributed to the public's enduring commitment to honour the service and sacrifice of generations of Victorians, and all those who suffer the consequences of war.

The Dawn Service Address was delivered by Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, the Governor of Victoria. The Ode was recited by Dr Robert Webster OAM, State President of RSL Victoria.

The subsequent ANZAC Day March was also extremely well-attended, with an estimated 9,500 Victorians lining the streets of Melbourne's CBD to pay their respects to our service men and women.

## REMEMBRANCE DAY

On Friday 11 November 2022, Melbourne's CBD paused in honour of our fallen soldiers for Remembrance Day as part of numerous commemorative events in Victoria.

A record 16 buglers took to the streets of the city for the annual Bugle Activation, a tradition more than 100 years old.

'The Last Post' was sounded, followed by the traditional one minute's silence, with buglers then playing 'The Rouse' to close proceedings.

For an intimate look at the Bugle Activation, please scan the QR code below to view a video taken at the intersection of Bourke and Swanston streets.



Scan to watch  
the Bugle  
Activation video





# THE ROAD IS LONG, BUT IT IS WALKED TOGETHER: RSL & THE ROCHESTER FLOOD

**Writer**  
Aileen Phillips

**Photos**  
Tim Collins

**Rochester residents have endured floods before, with the 2011 flood swallowing 80% of the town. However, they've never experienced anything like the flooding of 2022.**

A team from the Rochester RSL Sub-Branch spent days sandbagging and undertaking rescue work. When things turned catastrophic, they were soon assisted by members of numerous Sub-Branches including Elmore, Bendigo and Hawthorn.

Within days of the flood, a team from RSL Victoria's Veterans Services Department, including a social worker, deployed to Rochester to work with local veterans and triage their needs.

The RSL Victoria team prioritised keeping kids connected and enabling them to attend online classes, support for the elderly, providing the financially affected with food vouchers and linking flood victims to support networks including mental health organisations, and medical appointments.

RSL Victoria arranged for home repairs, replacement iPads, phones and provided thousands of dollars' worth of other necessities.

The Rochester Sub-Branch itself was flooded and original, century-old fittings were destroyed. Thankfully, the historical collection was able to be saved, but the building now sits an empty shell. Work continues today on its restoration.

Reflecting on the flood, Kris Stocker, RSL Rochester Sub-Branch Secretary said, "The Victorian RSL network's knowledge on how to get support for veterans ... has been paramount."



Scan to read  
the full story  
online



# SUB-BRANCH SUPPORT



Rosebud RSL Sub-Branch

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

2022 was a big year for the Network Service and Support Team. Right from the beginning of the year, the team was focused on continuing to strengthen relationships with the Sub-Branch network through a service-centric customer-focused business and support model. Our 'hands-on' approach always begins with the dedication of our Business Support Managers who maintain frequent and regular Sub-Branch visitation schedules.

Throughout the year, RSL Victoria's Business Support Managers continued to provide up-to-date advice to the Sub-Branch network in all areas including governance, customer service standards, financial performance and legislative and operational compliance.

## A RETURN TO MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Our dedicated staff and volunteers were ready to welcome back members and the wider community in 2022. Whether it was to catch up with friends or family, enjoy some entertainment, sit down to a delicious meal or access one of the vital services on offer to our veterans and their families, we could not have been more excited to have our community back in person.

## IGT MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM

The year also saw the successful implementation of the International Game Technology (IGT) membership system. The IGT system was previously operated by TABCORP as part of a 10-year agreement that ceased in August 2022. The IGT system is a membership system used by the State Branch and Sub-Branches to manage membership administration for our members. The IGT system is also used by participating Sub-Branches for gaming-related purposes. This project commenced in 2017 and culminated in August 2022 with the successful cut-over of services and hardware of 50 sites on transition night.

## CORPORATE AND BUSINESS SERVICES FORUMS

A total of four Sub-Branch Corporate and Business Services (C&BS) forums were held in 2022.

Held at ANZAC House at the Frankston RSL Sub-Branch, these forums are typically attended by 10A Sub-Branch General Managers as well as committee representatives. Forums were held both in person and online. C&BS forums provide the opportunity to present and provide information to the 10A network on commercial hospitality, compliance, governance and League matters.

## SUB-BRANCH GOVERNANCE

In 2022, RSL Victoria's Charity and Compliance Team continued to support all RSL Victoria Sub-Branches, ensuring their compliance with state and national legislative regulators.

Face-to-face Corporate Governance Training sessions were provided to the RSL Sub-Branch network. The sessions were held at ANZAC House and Darebin and Sale RSL Sub-Branches, with 117 attendees in total.

All sessions reached capacity with a high level of engagement from Sub-Branch committee members.

Throughout the year, committee members also accessed the Corporate Governance eLearning platform to refresh their knowledge in corporate governance requirements:

- 97 Governance eLearning enrolments from 10A Sub-Branches
- 42 Governance eLearning enrolments from 10B Sub-Branches
- 17 Governance eLearning enrolments from 10C Sub-Branches.

RSL Victoria collaborated with Sub-Branches to lodge 532 Agency and Patriotic Fund 2021 Statements with Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) and Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC) prior to their deadlines, with a 98% submission rate.

The team monitored and guided Sub-Branches to ensure that their responsibility to submit the Sub-Branch general account AIS to ACNC was accomplished prior to 30 June 2022. The Sub-Branch lodgement rate was 91%. To achieve these high percentages, the team ensured Sub-Branches were assisted by:

- Promptly providing guidance on management of accounts, welfare expenditure and preparation of reports
- Receiving a Financial Reporting Advice; a simplified and easy to read document listing all regulatory compliance requirements
- Onsite meetings with committee members
- Online meetings with committee members
- Telephone support.

Additionally, a Charity and Governance Compliance Review was conducted on all 52 10A Sub-Branches. This activity allows us to gather valuable data on Sub-Branch charitable compliance, which in turn allows us to support the RSL Victoria network in maintaining our charitable status.



# PROPERTY

RSL Victoria operates using a unique model whereby the majority of RSL Sub-Branch buildings are owned in a Patriotic Fund. This means that the buildings are subject to various laws and legislation underpinning their use, maintenance, development and renovation, where appropriate.

To ensure regulatory and legislative compliance across the network, RSL Victoria requires RSL Sub-Branches who wish to undertake capital works to Patriotic Fund assets, to submit their plans to both the Property and Legal Team at RSL Victoria and the RSL Victoria State Executive Property Committee. The RSL Victoria State Executive Property Committee considered over 1,500 matters over 10 meetings in 2022.

In addition to supporting Sub-Branches with their Patriotic Fund requirements, RSL Victoria also offers support to Sub-Branches seeking grants to undertake building works, and often grants relating to renovations or repairs of memorials or cenotaphs.

The Property and Legal Team makes itself available to Sub-Branches to provide general guidance on the types of works and eligibility requirements for grant applications. In some instances, the Team may play a role in providing trustee/landowner consent to apply, then approval for the works themselves if grant funding is awarded. This involves ensuring that the works are completed legally, by appropriately licensed and registered contractors, that all relevant planning and building permits are in place before commencement, and that additional funds are available to fund any shortfall that grant funding does not cover.

## WHAT IS A PATRIOTIC FUND?

Patriotic funds are a type of trust fund created after WWI, when Victorian communities raised money to assist soldiers and their families. They provide welfare services and clubrooms for returned personnel and their dependants.

## 2022 SUB-BRANCH GRANT RECIPIENTS

In 2022, the below Sub-Branches received funding for property improvements through various State Government grant programs.

- Clayton
- Clunes
- Creswick-Smeaton
- Dandenong Ranges
- Emerald
- Inverloch
- Lilydale
- Mentone
- Morwell
- Newport
- Oakleigh-Carnegie
- Pascoe Vale
- Terang
- Upwey-Belgrave
- Warrnambool
- Wangaratta
- Wedderburn-Korong Vale

# MEMBERSHIP

RSL Victoria administers, in conjunction with our 267 Sub-Branches, five different categories of membership. An RSL membership costs as little as \$10 annually.



### Life membership

Bestowed upon certain members for exceptional duration of membership and contribution to the organisation



### Service membership

Available to any person who has served in the ADF or its allies



### Affiliate membership

Available to any person who has a family member eligible for Service membership



### Social membership

Available to any member of the public via 10A and 10B Sub-Branches



### Community membership

Available to any member of the public via 10A Sub-Branches only

A significant amount of the administrative work relating to membership management is completed by Sub-Branch staff and volunteers, with the additional central oversight and support of RSL Victoria staff.

In 2022, RSL Victoria Member Services fielded:

2022	2021
<b>Phone enquiries</b>	
<b>1,705</b>	<b>1,950</b>
<b>Email enquiries</b>	
<b>9,006</b>	<b>7,950</b>
<b>Membership transfers</b> (from one Sub-Branch to another)	
<b>4,272</b>	<b>2,850</b>

Additionally, the Member Services Team processed over

# 5,500

new and renewing memberships.

## LOYALTY PROGRAM

RSL Victoria's loyalty program, RSL Rewards, provides members with infrastructure to support their purchases within RSL Victorian Sub-Branches. All financial members have access to the program in participating Sub-Branches throughout Victoria. The system allows members to earn points on food and beverage within all participating Sub-Branches across the State as well as exclusive items on the RSL Rewards website.

The much-anticipated return to the services and amenities within RSL's Sub-Branches saw a surge in points issued and in program participants.

2022	2021
<b>Number of points issued</b>	
<b>226,971,065</b>	<b>156,627,228</b>
<b>Number of RSL Rewards program participants</b>	
<b>152,545</b>	<b>128,091</b>
<b>Number of visits to the RSL Rewards website</b>	
<b>52,155</b>	<b>25,532</b>



# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

RSL Victoria is responsible for engaging veterans, their families and the wider community to raise the profile of the RSL in Victoria and the key issues facing veterans.

RSL Victoria also plays a major role in supporting commemoration throughout Victoria and deploys significant resources in the communication and marketing of major commemorative dates and the associated fundraising campaigns.

The focus of the Marketing and Communications work has been:

- To raise awareness and support of Veteran Services
- Campaign development and execution for RSL Victoria's two key fundraising initiatives (ANZAC Appeal and Poppy Appeal \*)
- To continue building strong partnerships with like-minded organisations to support veterans and their families.

## OVERVIEW

As the RSL's return to significant in-person activity across all facets of the organisation ramped up during 2022, the role of the Marketing and Communications Team increased. Narrative content was shared via the bi-annually published *Mufti* and online across RSL Victoria's website and social media channels. Pertinent news and updates were sent to Sub-Branches via the monthly eNews newsletter. Marketing campaigns to engage the Victorian public and highlight the extraordinary work of the RSL in Victoria were developed and carried out.

Throughout the year, RSL Victoria remained focused on sharing the stories from across the RSL in Victoria and amplifying the diverse voices found within it. Readers of this Report will find selected stories from the year placed throughout as 'Feature Stories'

RSL Victoria staff were kept abreast of all relevant happenings via the in-house Staff Hub and Weekly Wrap-Up newsletters. Town Hall meetings were held with both in person and virtual options and featured presentations from staff on a variety of subjects from across the organisation.

The team also played a large role in ensuring Victoria's continued commitment to commemoration, which resumed in-person in 2022 with great success and enthusiasm, via ANZAC Appeal and Poppy Appeal marketing campaigns.\* Additionally, in supporting vital governance outcomes for RSL Victoria, which included the Annual State Conference.

\*See page 30 for more information on the 2022 ANZAC and Poppy Appeals.

## DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Engaging members and the public through digital storytelling has always been a priority for RSL Victoria, one that became even more important during the pandemic. It was through social media that RSL Victoria maintained connection to much of our community, fire imaginations and build understanding.

As we emerged from the restrictions and everyday life began to resemble its familiar shape, social media and digital storytelling charted our re-emergence into something 'normal,' particularly in the commemorative and fundraising spaces.



### MUFTI

Two editions of RSL Victoria's member magazine, *Mufti*, were produced in 2022, with over 100,000 copies circulated.

Each *Mufti* features a wide range of articles and information highlighting the vibrancy and diversity of the RSL in Victoria. It is the ultimate showcase of our connectivity and community and displays the unyielding spirit of veterans and their families at its finest.

Each edition of *Mufti* receives effusive praise from readers, one of whom described the magazine as "...the glue that unites the RSL movement" in their correspondence to the editors.



# FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

## FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

The finances of RSL Victoria are represented by five entities.

- 1 Returned & Services League of Australia (Victorian Branch) Inc. ABN 73 941 765 364
- 2 RSL Victoria General Appeals Patriotic Fund ABN 85 107 546 293
- 3 RSL Victoria House Building Fund ABN 53 294 327 597
- 4 Returned & Services League of Australia Statewide Building Patriotic Fund ABN 58 414 029 878
- 5 Returned & Services League of Australia (Victoria Branch) Welfare Trust Fund ABN 39 275 302 584

RSL Victoria's mission and strategic priorities guide our delivery of services and supports for veterans and families. RSL Victoria is focused on balancing the delivery of services and supports with financial sustainability.

COVID-19 continued to have an impact with staff working from home for the majority of the year, however as the year progressed we returned to a 'business-as-usual' operating model.

We have two main entities: the first being The Returned & Services League of Australia (Victorian Branch) Inc. which derives income through support fees and membership affiliation programs and is responsible for enabling and supporting Sub-Branches to deliver on the mission and advocating on behalf of veterans and their dependants.

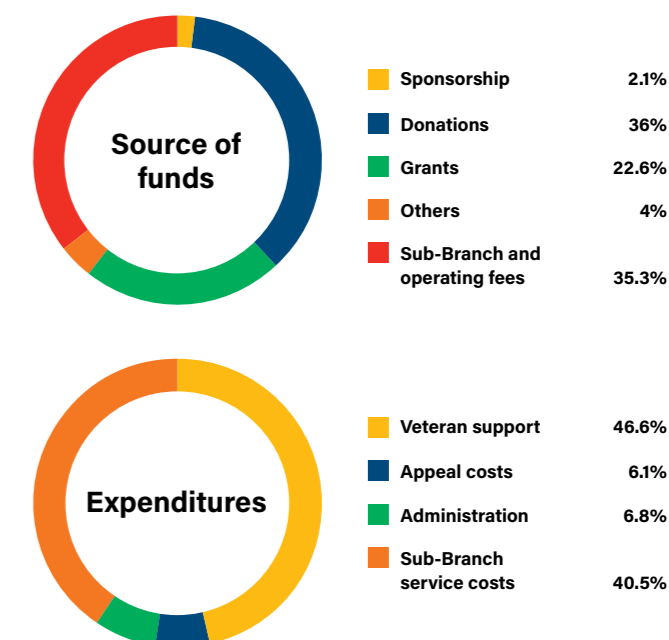
We recognise our obligation to ensure that the funds given to us by Sub-Branches are used efficiently and effectively to create value across the RSL in Victoria.

Our philanthropic income is derived from the RSL Victoria General Appeals Patriotic Fund where we fundraise in the ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day Appeals. The funds are spent on the delivery of veteran welfare support programs. We would like to thank the individuals and organisations who have generously donated, bequeathed, contributed and partnered with RSL to help support veterans.

We are conservative in managing costs to ensure we have maximum impact in the assistance we provide veterans. We incur costs associated with veteran support (program management, salaries for welfare staff), welfare grants (grants to veterans in need), Appeal costs (cost of goods sold, advertising, running ANZAC and Remembrance Day Commemoration activities) and administration (costs required to efficiently run the organisation including office administration, professional fees, salaries, insurances, equipment).

During FY22 we worked in partnership with the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Beaumaris RSL Sub-Branch to open a new Veterans & Families Hub in Wodonga which is a long-term investment in the community to provide ongoing and future assistance to veterans and families.

Our activities are summarised below for transparency (note the RSL Victoria House financials are excluded) and our audited financial statements are available on our website.







# RECOGNITION & RESPECT

**Writer**  
Aileen Phillips

**Photos**  
Stacey Solomon

**In 1982, Philip Neil and four other members of the Gay Ex-Services Association wanted to pay tribute to the service of the LGBTIQ+ community at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance.**

The group carried a wreath to the Shrine dedicated to all their brothers and sisters who died during the wars.

A tense and heartbreaking confrontation between the men and the then-RSL President took place on the Shrine's steps before the group was escorted off the premises.

Feeling betrayed by the RSL, Phil distanced himself from the organisation until, upon retirement, he moved to Mildura and joined the local RSL Sub-Branch.

Emboldened by positive experiences with Mildura RSL Sub-Branch, Phil shared his story. The welcoming and supportive response was nothing short of a relief.

In 2022, Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance launched *Defending with Pride: Stories of LGBTQ+ Service*, an exhibition showcasing the history of LGBTQ+ people in service.

Phil participated in the Last Post Service and the exhibition's opening, laying a wreath to honour LGBTQ+ personnel. Forty years since his deeply upsetting visit, he returned for those no longer here; his hopes of building recognition and acceptance finally recognised.



Scan to read  
the full story  
online



# GOVERNANCE

**RSL Victoria's State Executive (the Board) is responsible for the governance and strategic direction of RSL Victoria. The State President is the Chair of the State Executive.**

The State Executive's responsibilities include:

- Approving the mission and strategic direction of RSL Victoria
- Appointing and monitoring the performance of the Chief Executive Officer of RSL Victoria
- Overseeing and reviewing the management and performance of RSL Victoria
- Overseeing risk management across the RSL in Victoria
- Overseeing veteran support activities
- Supporting significant commercial activities
- Establishing and issuing charters to RSL Sub-Bran­ches and overseeing the provision of a range of services to these Sub-Bran­ches, as the member organisations of the State Branch.

RSL Victoria's State Executive is responsible for the administration of a number of funds and entities and its Board Members are trustees for a number of funds/entities including the:

- Returned & Services League of Australia (Victorian Branch) Inc.
- RSL General Appeals Patriotic Fund
- RSL Statewide Building Patriotic Fund
- Welfare Trust Fund
- a large volume of Sub-Branch Patriotic Funds.

## RSL VICTORIA'S 107TH ANNUAL STATE CONFERENCE

RSL Victoria held its 107th Annual Conference at Caulfield Racecourse on 16 July 2022. The conference was a hybrid event that saw 242 delegates participate in person and online. An additional 157 people viewed the conference via YouTube.

RSL Victoria welcomed two new members to our Executive Board as a result of the elections. Lindsay Guerin from Inverloch RSL Sub-Branch and John Beslee from the Seaford RSL Sub-Branch.\* RSL Victoria's State President, Dr Robert Webster OAM, was elected for a fourth term at the conference. These terms commenced at the conclusion of the conference.

\*Please see more information regarding the new Board Members in the State Executive section on page 46.

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2019–2023: REFLECTIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS

As the conclusion of the 2019–2023 Strategic Plan approached, RSL Victoria opened up discussion with Sub-Bran­ches right around the network to collaboratively complete the structure of the new Strategic Plan.

It is important that Sub-Bran­ches feel both welcomed and empowered to contribute to this process and help build the direction of the RSL over the coming years as we continue to modernise our services to veterans and their families, improve the connectivity of our network and further the objectives of our mission.

***The new Strategic Plan will be launched at the 2023 RSL Victoria State Conference this July.***

## ACHIEVEMENTS

**GOAL Reinforce a core culture of governance excellence to Sub-Bran­ches and State Branch**

### Achievements

- Governance forums and training held multiple times annually
- Introduced Board software at State Branch to increase access to minutes, structure meeting agendas and hold reference library of policy documents
- Invested in additional risk and compliance resources to provide guidance and support across the network.

**GOAL Develop, enhance and continue to deliver services to veterans with diverse and individual needs**

### Achievements

- Launched Veteran Central call centre model to enable veterans and families to access a broad range of services initially during COVID-19
- Opened five Veterans & Families Wellbeing Hubs to provide safe and inclusive spaces for veterans and their families
- Engaged paid compensation Advocates to support volunteer network and to support the most complex cases.

**GOAL Articulate our role in society and celebrate our achievements**

### Achievements

- 50,000 attendees at 2022 ANZAC Day Dawn Service
- Two editions of *Mufti* magazine each year proudly telling the stories of the RSL and veteran community in Victoria
- Successful ANZAC and Poppy Appeals from growing support from the community to the work of the RSL.

**GOAL Review and modify our organisational structure to reflect the changing needs and expectations of our stakeholders and to deliver our strategic initiatives**

### Achievements

- No structural changes; however, preparatory work was commissioned.

**GOAL Be agile and innovative in supporting Sub-Branch commercial operations**

### Achievements

- Successfully transitioned to IGT in 2022, bringing in-house expertise to support commercial operations
- Provided both financial and network advice and guidance through COVID-19
- Rolled out new IGT membership system
- Continued strengthening of IT systems and procedures.



# RSL VICTORIA'S STATE EXECUTIVE



## STATE PRESIDENT DR ROBERT WEBSTER OAM

RSL Victoria's President, Dr Robert Webster OAM, was called up for national service in 1969. He served in Vietnam with 26 Transport Company, Royal Australian Army Service Corps, from February 1970 until February 1971. He has been a member of the Returned & Services League for 50 years, with Henley & Grange RSL in South Australia being his first Sub-Branch. Rob joined the State Executive of RSL Victoria in 1989 and was elected State President in February 2017 and re-elected in 2020. Rob is passionate about the RSL and its role in supporting Australian veterans and leading national commemoration.



## STATE HONORARY TREASURER TIMOTHY HOLDEN FCA GAICD RITP

Timothy Holden enlisted with the Royal Australian Navy in 1979 and was granted an honorable discharge in 1982 at the rank of Able Seaman. He has been a member of Beaumaris RSL since 2013 and has served as Treasurer of the Sub-Branch since 2017. In May 2021, Timothy was appointed State Honorary Treasurer of RSL Victoria. He is a Chartered Accountant, a registered Trustee in Bankruptcy and Registered Liquidator. He has taken hundreds of appointments as an External Administrator of companies and incorporated associations or as the Trustee of debtors' affairs. In 2018, he joined the Australian Institute of Company Directors and passed the Company Directors Course with an Order of Merit in January 2019.



## ANDREW HANNS

Andrew Hanns was elected to the RSL State Executive in November 2020. He previously served as a Reserve Forces Rifleman at Geelong Deakin University Company in 1992 before joining the regular Army and becoming an ASLAV Armoured Vehicle Crew Commander. Andrew was deployed to East Timor INTERFET in 1999. Outside service, he worked in the construction industry for a decade as well as helping veterans in the vital role of Wellbeing Advocate at Geelong RSL, where he has also served three terms as Sub-Branch President.



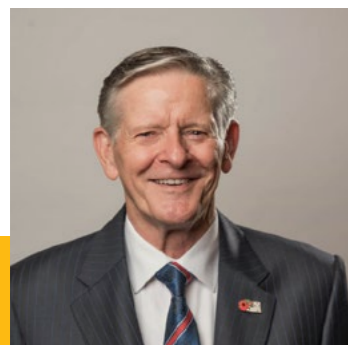
## STATE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT DESMOND (DES) ANTHONY CALLAGHAN OAM BJ JP

Desmond (Des) Callaghan OAM was called up for national service in 1968, serving with the 104 Signals Squadron from 1968 to 1970. Since his discharge in 1970 he has been committed to serving the community. He has been a Legacy member since 1997, and RSL member since 1978, a Bail Justice since 1990 and a Justice of the Peace since 1998. He was awarded Life Membership to the RSL in 2000 and was awarded the RSL's highest honour, the Meritorious Service Medal in 2011. Des has served on the RSL Victoria State Executive since 2016.



## ANGE KENOS JP

Ange Kenos joined the RSL Victoria State Executive in November 2020. He is a former Naval Reserve Diver and Navigating Officer and a former higher education teacher. Ange is a motivated volunteer and has served on numerous boards and committees including the RACV, Eye and Ear Hospital, SIO/GIO Consumer Appeals Centre, Lemnos Gallipoli Commemorative Committee, the Battle of Crete and Greece Commemorative Council and the Greek Committee.



## VICE PRESIDENT TERRY MAKINGS AM

Terry Makings is a proud member of Geelong RSL. He served in the Royal Australian Navy for over 20 years and was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia (Military Division) in 1985. On leaving the Navy, he held senior appointments at City of Melbourne and City of Greater Geelong before becoming a consultant. He is a Governor — Shrine of Remembrance and President of several ex-Navy associations. He holds a Master of Business degree, is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a Fellow of the Institution of Engineers Australia. He is Chair — RSL Veteran Affairs Committee, Deputy Chair — RSL Finance Committee and also the RSL Risk, Audit and Governance Committee.



## DAVID MARTIN OAM

David Martin joined the Australian Army in 1964, aged just 15, via the Army Apprenticeship School. He resigned after 21 years of service, during which he rose to the rank of Captain. David has been a member of Rutherglen RSL Sub-Branch since 1985, serving as its President on three occasions. He was awarded Life Membership to the RSL in 2004, received the RSL's highest honour, the Meritorious Service Medal in 2016 and was elected to the RSL Victoria State Executive in 2018. David has strong community ties, having been a Legatee for over 20 years, a Victorian Bail Justice and a Councillor on Rutherglen Council.





### JOHN BESLEE (FROM JULY 2022)

John Beslee became a member of the RSL State Executive in 2022 and is currently Deputy Chair of the CBSC committee and STEX Metropolitan representative to Region 4. This new venture for him follows a lengthy period at Seaford RSL Sub-Branch where he spent over 16 years variously as Committeeman, Secretary, Treasurer and President. Whilst President, he also took on the role of Appeals Officer where he introduced the use of portable EFTPOS machines to the appeals system throughout Victoria. He was honoured in 2015 by being inducted into the RSL Hall of Fame and in 2022 was made a Life Member of the RSL. John's service career began when he joined the RAN in 1967, then on discharge he worked in the building industry. He is also a dedicated blood donor with over 200 donations to date and counting.



### LINDSAY GUERIN (FROM JULY 2022)

WGCDR (Ret'd) Lindsay Guerin is Secretary of Inverloch RSL Sub-Branch. Lindsay served 33 years in the RAAF as a Personnel Capability Officer. Twelve years in Headquarters Joint Operations Command has given Lindsay an intimate knowledge of operational planning and conduct. Deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan provided additional operational experience. Previous service includes workforce structures, Reserve Force management and administration across Force Element Group, Wing and unit levels. Prior to his RAAF service, he had marketing experience with an Associate Membership of the Australian Marketing Institute and an associate degree in law. He is a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and Chair of the working group for the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.



### SIMON THORNE

Simon Thorne joined the RSL Victoria State Executive in November 2020. He is a former commissioned Australian Regular Army Officer who served in a variety of roles including in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has held senior roles at the Office of Police Integrity and the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission. Simon was previously the Senior Executive responsible for regulation of the apprenticeship and vocational education sectors in Victoria and is currently a Senior Executive in the national vocational education regulator. He holds a Master of Business Administration from La Trobe University, is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and an ANZSOG Executive Fellow.



### GLEN FERRAROTTO (TO JULY 2022)

Glen Ferrarotto served in the Australian Army for more than a decade before discharging in 2008. Since then, he has dedicated himself to supporting veterans. In 2012, Glen founded Australia's first dedicated recruitment agency for veterans, Ironside Recruitment. Since that time, he has paved the way for many Australian veterans to access and develop long-term, meaningful careers outside of the ADF. Glen joined the Montmorency-Eltham RSL Sub-Branch in 2015 and has served as Sub-Branch Senior Vice President since 2017.

# RSL VICTORIA'S EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM



### CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUE CATTERMOLLE (FROM JULY 2022)

Sue is CEO of the RSL in Victoria. Prior to taking on the role in July 2022, Sue served in senior executive roles in the not-for-profit sector. She was the Group CEO of St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria for six years, CEO SkillsPlus Group for five years and part of the Senior Executive of Wesley Mission Victoria for five years. She has served on several government advisory, industry and community organisation boards. Sue is a graduate of the Company Directors Course and holds a diploma in Applied Corporate Governance from the Governance Institute of Australia.



### INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (TO JULY 2022) BRIAN CAIRNS

Mr Brian Cairns has a very distinguished 30-year association with the RSL and acted as Interim Chief Executive Officer at RSL Victoria from 2021 to July 2022 providing leadership, governance and direction to both the organisation and the network. In 2008, Brian joined RSL Victoria as the LSBA Executive Officer and in 2012 he became the Manager of Commercial Operations. In 2015 Brian was appointed the Chief Operations Officer.



### ACTING CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER CLINT BREWSTER

Clint Brewster has a comprehensive background in team development, coaching and growth. His experience in hospitality, retail, risk management, auditing and compliance is extensive. Clint commenced with RSL Victoria in 2012 as Business Development Manager. In 2016, he was appointed to the role of Governance, Compliance and Risk Manager. In 2021, he started in the new role of Senior Manager-Network, Services and Support before becoming Chief Operations Officer.





**EXECUTIVE GENERAL MANAGER STRATEGY, GOVERNANCE & RISK**  
**KYLE PRASSER**

Kyle Prasser joined RSL Victoria as Executive Officer in 2021, with responsibilities for supporting the administration of the State Executive in a Branch Secretary capacity. He has worked at executive/senior leadership levels within disability, mental health, aged care, public health and homelessness services and has served as a Company Secretary for numerous charities both locally and interstate. Kyle is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and an Affiliate member of the RSL. In 2022, Kyle's role was broadened to take on Strategy & Risk.



**CHIEF OF VETERAN SERVICES (TO DECEMBER 2022)**  
**ADAM LAWSON**

Adam Lawson joined RSL Victoria as the Chief of Veteran Services in February 2020. Adam is a former Air Combat Officer with more than 20 years of experience. He served in multiple overseas deployments before leaving the Air Force in 2010.



**ACTING CHIEF OF VETERAN SERVICES (FROM DECEMBER 2022)**  
**BENJAMIN WEBB**

At the end of 2022, Benjamin Webb became the Acting Chief of Veteran Services at RSL Victoria, leading the Veteran Services Department in providing State Branch information and support services and collaborating with RSL Sub-Branched to produce a modern, integrated service model supporting veterans and their families.

Ben's experiences include 12 years of service in the Australian Army, where he was awarded a commendation for performance while deployed to Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010. After leaving the Australian Defence Force, he managed a Sydney-based Veteran Centre which gained sector acknowledgement for its innovation and service quality. In 2020, Ben joined RSL Victoria as the Veteran Hubs Manager leading the planning and implementation of RSL Victoria's Veterans & Families Hubs network.

# AWARDS

**MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL**

- Godfrey (Noel) Tucker (Warragul)
- Noelene Park (Hurstbridge)
- Robert Sutton (Inverloch)

**LIFE MEMBERSHIP WITH GOLD BADGE**

- Michael Annett CSC (Headquarters)
- Peter Smith OAM (Headquarters)
- Edward Bartosh (Yarra Glen)
- Edward Cross (Inverloch)
- Dal Crocker (Greensborough)
- Gaylene Duncan (Returned and Servicewomen)

**LIFE MEMBERSHIP**

- Chris Newell (Lilydale)
- Kevin Parker (Balmoral)
- Gerard Watson (Balmoral)
- Jeffrey Stanyer (Numurkah)
- Brett Taylor-Parkins (Benalla)
- Manfred (Fred) Wawrzik (Elmore)
- Robert Worlley (Upper Yarra)
- Terry Kanellos OAM (Hellenic)
- Peter Franklin JP (Swan Hill)
- Neil Selleck (Woorinen)
- Dieter Jankovic (Sunbury)
- Martin Tanzer (Sale RSL & Community)
- Ian Lawrey OAM (Melton)
- Barry Meldrum (Woodend)
- Raymond Duckett (Altona)
- Richard Embleton (Geelong)
- John Braniiff (Mildura)
- Peter Paul (Phillip Island)
- Barrie Goldsbury (Phillip Island)

- Paul Blackwell (Shepparton)
- Peter (John) Langford (Inverloch)
- John Forster (Dromana/Red Hill)
- John Beslee (Seaford)
- Ian Bates (Bendigo and District)

**LIFE MEMBERSHIP (WOMEN'S AUXILIARY)**

- Margaret Motton (Lang Lang)
- Dallis Cole (Lang Lang)
- Jacqueline Kelberg (Darebin)
- Jan Leggieri (Bairnsdale)

**NATIONAL CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION**

- Iain Townsley (Mt Evelyn)
- Peter Renton (Angeles City)

**50-YEAR LONG SERVICE AWARD**

- John Armstrong (Castlemaine)
- Frederick Bottrell (Ringwood)
- Kevin Bate (Lara)
- William Wearne (Yea-Kinglake)
- Brian Elliott (Geelong)
- Godfrey (Noel) Tucker (Warragul)
- Wesley Bertuch (Rochester)
- William Grant (Boronia)
- Bruce Jeffrey (Morwell)
- Les Maher (Morwell)
- Graham Burgess (Morwell)
- Alfred Darling (Morwell)
- Rodney Lucas (Morwell)
- Ian Caines (Moe)
- Maxwell Farrow (Tramways/East Melbourne)
- Raymond Gordon (Bentleigh)
- John Biles (Seaford)

**60-YEAR LONG SERVICE AWARD**

- Milton Hoe (Geelong)

**75-YEAR LONG SERVICE AWARD**

- Francis Hayes (Geelong)
- George Sutherland (Headquarters)
- Alan Thompson (East Malvern)

**AUSTRALIA DAY ACHIEVEMENT MEDALLIONS 2022**

- Jason Cooke
- Bruce (Stretch) Jarvis
- David Ridley
- Lee Webb



# SIGNIFICANT ANNIVERSARIES

CELEBRATED

**100<sup>th</sup>**  
ANNIVERSARY  
IN 2022

The following Sub-Branches celebrated their 100th anniversaries in 2022

## CHELTENHAM

(formation date: 30 June 1922)

## CHELSEA

(formation date: 01 August 1922)

## ENSAY

(formation/charter date: 08 June 1922)

## MEREBIN

(formation date: 01 September 1922)

## MORWELL

(formation/charter date: 01 January 1922)

CELEBRATED

**75<sup>th</sup>**  
ANNIVERSARY  
IN 2022

The following Sub-Branches celebrated their 75th anniversaries in 2022

## FAWKNER

(formation date: 20 July 1947)

## HIGHETT

(formation/charter date: 23 May 1947)

## RETURNED NURSES CLUB

(formation/charter date: 01 April 1947)



Thank you for reading. Should you wish to connect with us further and explore all areas of the wide RSL network and community, our social channels details can be found on the back cover of this Report. Our audited financials and past Annual Reports are available on our website [rslvic.com.au](https://www.rslvic.com.au)





**RSL**  
Victoria

**CONNECT WITH US**

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